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# Parents rally after Bronx teacher allegedly stepped on students for slavery lesson

Posted: Feb 06, 2018 6:13 PM EST  
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NEW YORK - Parents and education advocates rallied Tuesday on the steps of City Hall to call for better teacher training when it comes to lessons dealing with slavery.

The rally stemmed from an incident at M.S. 118 in which teacher Patricia Cummings reportedly stepped on students' backs to show the class what slavery felt like.

"We don't have to actually make students feel like slaves to teach them about slavery," one parent said.

While at City Hall, the New York City Coalition for Education Justice demanded to meet with Mayor Bill de Blasio. He wasn't there, but they did get to meet with his chief of staff. The group says the mayor's office plans to work with them.

News 12 reached out to the mayor's office and Department of Education for comment but didn't immediately hear back.

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# Bronx Teacher Uses Disgusting Physical Exercise to Show 'How It Feels to Be a Slave'



BY JULIA PIMENTEL  
News + Pop Culture | @julia\_rdsp

FEB 02, 2018



Image via Getty/Ranin Talaie

Students and parents of Bronx Middle School 118 were shocked to discover that social studies teacher Patricia Cummings went to disturbing lengths to teach her class about slavery.

Cummings picked the black students in her class and made them lie down on the floor, at which point she stepped on their backs to “show them what slavery felt like,” the *New York Daily News* reports. Cummings reportedly used this insensitive method, if it can be called that, of teaching in multiple seventh-grade classrooms. Cummings is white; the students at MS118 are 81 percent black and Hispanic, and only 3 percent white.

“It was a lesson about slavery and the Triangle Trade,” a boy in one Cummings’s class told the *Daily News*. “She picked three of the black kids,” and made them get on the floor in front of the class. “She said, ‘You see how it was to be a slave?’ She said, ‘How does it feel?’”

At some point, a girl from one of the classes who was on the floor tried to make a joke and said she actually felt fine. That’s when Cummings stepped on her back, according to the student.

“She put her foot on her back and said ‘How does it feel?’” the student said. “See how it feels to be a slave?”

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“She had students lie on the floor,” said another student. “She was measuring the length and width to show how little space slaves had in the ship. It was strange.”

Cummings was removed, but only for a few days. She returned to class on Thursday. Later in that same day, Cummings was “reassigned away from children,” only after the *Daily News* contacted New York City’s Education Department and informed them of her slavery lesson.

“While the investigation has not been completed, these are deeply disturbing allegations, and the alleged behavior has no place in our schools or in society,” said Education Department spokeswoman Toya Holness.

The principal of the school, Giulia Cox, declined to comment.

Cummings herself also refused to speak to a reporter who approached her after school on Thursday.

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# A teacher allegedly had black students lie on floor for slavery lesson, sparking outrage

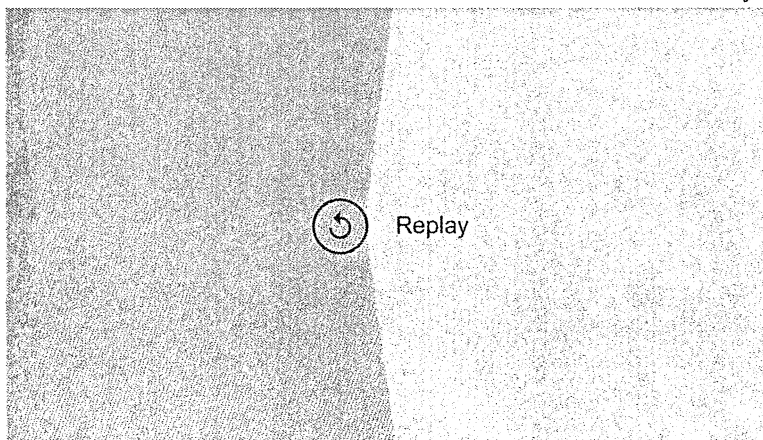
The teacher allegedly singled out black students, told them to lie on the floor.



A New York City middle school teacher's lesson on slavery in America has sparked outrage after she allegedly singled out black students and told them to lie face-down on the classroom floor.


Students and a staff member at a middle school in the Bronx told the [New York Daily News](#) that social studies teacher Patricia Cummings was giving a lesson to several 7th-grade classes about the Middle Passage, the harrowing journey of millions of Africans who were kidnapped and shipped to America as part of the Atlantic slave trade.

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 (Corbis via Getty Images) Scene in the hold of the 'blood-stained Gloria.' (Middle Passage).

The student body at the William W. Niles School, M.S. 118, is 60 percent Hispanic, 21 percent black, 16 percent Asian and 3 percent white, according to the latest statistics from the New York City Department of Education.

Cummings has since been reassigned away from students and an investigation into the alleged incident is underway, according to New York City Department of Education spokesperson Toya Holness.

"While the investigation has not been completed, these are deeply disturbing allegations, and the alleged behavior has no place in our schools or in society. She has been reassigned away from students and we're providing the school with additional supports," Holness told ABC News in a statement Saturday.





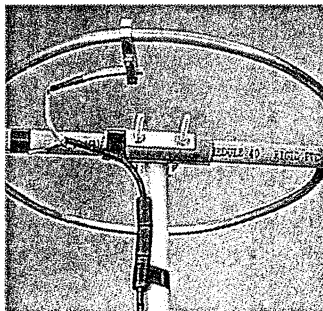
(Google Maps) An exterior shot of the William W. Niles School, M.S. 118, in the Bronx borough of New York City

The New York City Department of Education is deploying additional counselors and school-climate specialists to M.S. 118 to support students and staff as needed, department officials told ABC News. The school's principal is meeting with students and families and the superintendent has visited the school to support the community. The school also sent a letter home with students to their families, the officials said.

M.S. 118 principal Giulia Cox did not immediately respond to ABC News' request for comment Saturday.

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## Thousands sign parents' petition demanding action from de Blasio on racist school incidents

By BEN CHAPMAN

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS | APR 09, 2018



Natasha Capers, a coordinator for NYC Coalition for Educational Justice, speaks during a demonstration at City Hall on Feb. 6. (James Keivom/New York Daily News)

Do you hear them now, Mr. Mayor?

City parents are giving Mayor de Blasio a petition bearing 20,000 signatures Tuesday that calls on him to act after the Daily News reported on a string of racist incidents in the public schools.

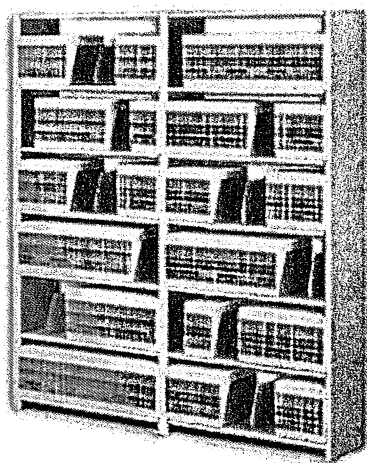
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"It's been more than a month since the Daily News broke a story about a white teacher in the Bronx who, in a lesson on slavery and the Middle Passage, made black students in several classes lay face-down on the floor and even stepped on a female student while asking, 'See how it feels to be a slave?' " states the online petition created by the city's largest parent-led coalition, the Coalition for Educational Justice.

"It's been more than a month, and the city has still not taken any steps to ensure that this type of degrading and traumatic incident will not occur again," it continues.

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The petition was circulated by the coalition, along with Color of Change. The Oakland, Calif., group is the nation's largest racial justice organization.





Parents are making another push to get Mayor de Blasio to address racist incidents in schools. (Barry Williams/for New York Daily News)

It calls on the city to expand anti-bias training for city teachers, improve school curriculum to reflect student diversity and create an "Office of Culturally Responsive Education" within the city Education Department.

Bronx Middle School 118 teacher Patricia Cummings, who's accused of presenting the racist slavery lesson, was reassigned to a rubber room on Feb. 1 after The News published reports of her actions. Education Department officials are investigating the allegations.

The News' reports of racist incidents at MS 118 and other city schools have prompted a string of protests since February.

After the story about the slavery lesson, The News reported about the refusal by administrators at Christ the King High School in Queens to allow student Malcolm Xavier Combs display the name — his name — "Malcolm X" on the back of his senior sweater.







Teacher Patricia Cummings has been relegated to a rubber room over accusations that she conducted a racist slavery lesson. (Andrew Savulich/New York Daily News)

The school still refuses to allow Combs to wear his name, and that of his namesake, on his school sweater. Combs' attorney filed a complaint with the city Human Rights Commission over the matter on April 3.

The city is also investigating reports The News published in February that a Bronx principal barred the teaching of black history lessons at her school.

A spokeswoman for Mayor de Blasio didn't respond to a request for comment on the petition.

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## Ben Chapman



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Ben Chapman is an award-winning reporter who covers education for the New York Daily News. A graduate of Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism whose work has also been published in the Washington Post and the New York Times, Chapman has written more than 2,000 articles about New York City schools for the Daily News since joining the paper in 2009. In 2015 Chapman was awarded a first-place citation for his education coverage in the New York State Associated Press Association contest. He was recognized by the New York State Associated Press Association again in 2016 with an award for in-depth reporting. Chapman is also a regular speaker in public forums and makes frequent appearances on television and radio.

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## Parents urge de Blasio to give teachers anti-bias training after cruel slavery lesson at Bronx school

By ELLEN MOYNIHAN, MOLLY CRANE-NEWMAN and BEN CHAPMAN FEB 02, 2018 | 7:10 PM



Parents are calling on Mayor de Blasio to provide anti-bias training for teachers after The News exposed a [shocking slavery lesson](#) at Bronx Middle School 118.

Teacher Patricia Cummings was removed from her post Thursday after students and a staffer said she singled out black students and told them to lie on the floor for a lesson on U.S. slavery — and then stepped on their backs to show them what slavery felt like.



Parents are pressing Mayor de Blasio to take action and train teachers in cultural sensitivity after a Bronx teacher gave students a shocking slavery lesson at Bronx Middle School 118. (Howard Simmons/New York Daily News)

The alleged actions of Cummings, a seventh-grade social studies teacher who is white, sparked outrage around the city and quickly gained international notoriety.

Parents expressed disgust at the story and called on Mayor de Blasio to train

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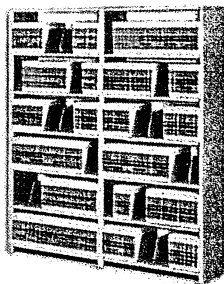
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by Taboola

"Parents of color have been asking for this kind of training for years and the Mayor has been ignoring our voices," said Bronx mom Annagine Lewis, a representative of the citywide Coalition for Educational Justice.

"This is much bigger than one teacher. This is not the first incident," said Lewis, 47, a retail worker who has a child enrolled in a Bronx public school.



Parents have been disgusted after learning a Bronx school teacher gave a cruel lesson on slavery at Bronx Middle School 118. (Gregg Vigliotti/For New York Daily News)

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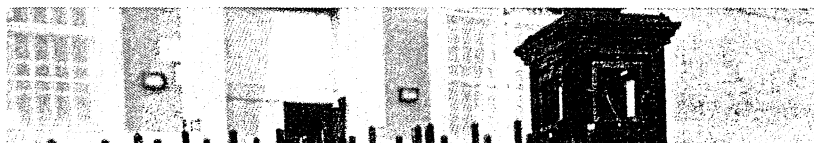
The incident at MS 118 is the latest in a string of events that raised concerns about cultural sensitivity in the public schools.

In 2013, two teachers from Manhattan Public School 59 issued a homework assignment to students that used killing and whipping slaves to teach basic math.

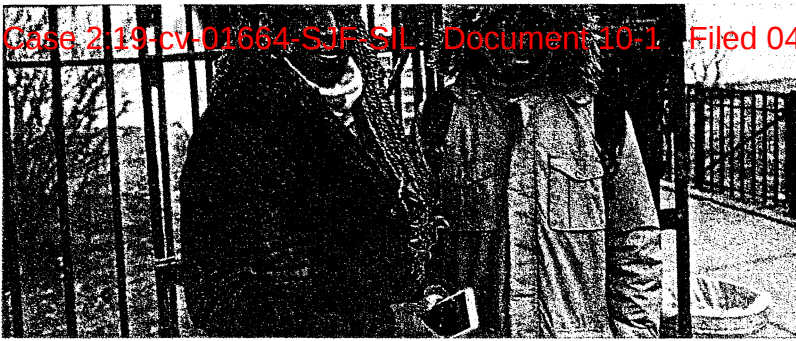
They received training in cultural sensitivity after the incident but were not disciplined.

And in May a substitute teacher at Bronx Public School 76 was fired after he ripped a hijab off the head of a Bronx second-grader.

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MS 118 parent Tamika Lasane, 36, (l.) said all the city's teachers should be mandated to take a cultural sensitivity training. (Gregg Vigliotti/For New York Daily News)

Parents at MS 118 were furious over the allegations against Cummings, who started working in city schools in 2016.

MS 118 parent Tamika Lasane, 36, said all the city's teachers should be required to take cultural sensitivity and anti-bias training.

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"They need to take lessons in that so it doesn't happen again," said Lasane, whose son is in the seventh grade.

"This is February, this is Black History Month also, so I don't know what they're gonna teach them."



"Parents of color have been asking for this kind of training for years and the Mayor has been ignoring our voices," said Bronx mom Annagine Lewis. (Gregg Vigliotti/For New York Daily News)

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Education Department officials said the city has provided anti-bias training to 450 city teachers in a new program this year, a fraction of the city's teaching force of more than 77,000.

Mayor de Blasio refused to answer questions about the MS 118 incident at an unrelated press conference on Friday, but city schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña said the matter is being investigated.

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Patricia Cummings, a social studies teacher, was removed from her post after giving her students a cruel lesson on slavery at MS 118. (Andrew Savulich/New York Daily News)

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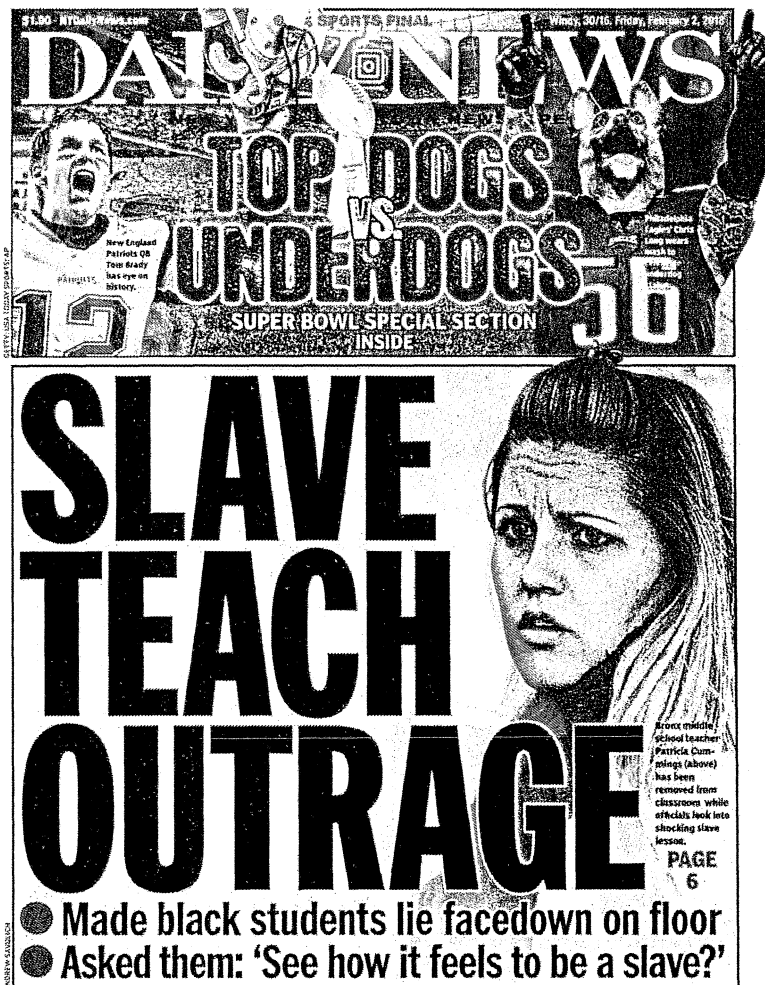
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"It's a very serious allegation, and she was removed, and I think at this point we have to wait for the investigation to be complete," Fariña said.

A de Blasio spokeswoman said the city has greatly expanded the scope of anti-bias training for city educators.



Front page of the New York Daily News for Feb. 2, 2018. (New York Daily News)

Parents held multiple demonstrations outside city Education Department headquarters and City Hall in 2017 calling for the city to release funding for anti-bias training for teachers.

Money to train more than 600 teachers was set aside for the effort in June but the anti-bias lessons for teachers didn't begin until January.

Cummings didn't respond to a request for comment. She is reassigned away from

**Ben Chapman**

CONTACT



Ben Chapman is an award-winning reporter who covers education for the New York Daily News. A graduate of Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism whose work has also been published in the Washington Post and the New York Times, Chapman has written more than 2,000 articles about New York City schools for the Daily News since joining the paper in 2009. In 2015 Chapman was awarded a first-place citation for his education coverage in the New York State Associated Press Association contest. He was recognized by the New York State Associated Press Association again in 2016 with an award for in-depth reporting. Chapman is also a regular speaker in public forums and makes frequent appearances on television and radio.

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EDUCATION NEW YORK

## Bronx teacher sparks outrage for using black students in cruel slavery lesson

By KERRY BURKE, ESHA RAY and BEN CHAPMAN  
FEB 01, 2018 | 9:00 PM



"Bronx teacher sparks outrage for cruel slavery lesson" will play after the ad

00:11



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Kids and parents say this Bronx teacher needs a lesson — in racism.

Middle School 118 teacher Patricia Cummings shocked and traumatized children in her social studies classes when she singled out black students and told them to lie on the floor for a lesson on U.S. slavery — and then stepped on their backs to show them what slavery felt like, students and a staffer said.

Students said Cummings, who is white, pulled the insensitive stunt in multiple seventh-grade classes as part of a unit on the infamous Middle Passage, in which Africans were kidnapped and brought to America as part of the slave trade.

Kids and adults in Cummings' school, where the student body is 81% black and Hispanic and just 3% white, were horrified by the offensive lessons they said occurred roughly two weeks ago.

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"It was a lesson about slavery and the Triangle Trade," said one of Cummings' students, who asked to remain anonymous.

"She picked three of the black kids," the boy said, and instructed them to get on the floor in front of the class. "She said, 'You see how it was to be a slave?' She said, 'How does it feel?' "





Patricia Cummings, a social studies teacher, leaves MS 118 in the Bronx on Thursday. (Andrew Savulich/New York Daily News)

When a girl on the floor made an uncomfortable joke and said she felt fine, Cummings stepped on her back, the student said.

"She put her foot on her back and said 'How does it feel?'" the student said. " 'See how it feels to be a slave?' "

Cummings was removed from her post for a couple of days following the incident but then returned to class and was in school Thursday.

However, the \$68,934-a-year teacher was reassigned away from children later Thursday, after the Daily News contacted the city Education Department about her slavery lesson.

"While the investigation has not been completed, these are deeply disturbing allegations, and the alleged behavior has no place in our schools or in society," said Education Department spokeswoman Toya Holness.

MS 118 Principal Giulia Cox declined to comment.





Teacher Patricia Cummings was reassigned after lesson at Bronx Middle School 118 in which kids say she had black students lie on the floor as she stepped on them. (Howard Simmons/New York Daily News)

Cummings' students said the lesson followed a showing of a video of slaves being beaten, tortured and thrown over the side of a ship.

"She had students lie on the floor," said another kid who was in one of the lessons. "She was measuring the length and width to show how little space slaves had in the ship. It was strange."

Cummings has worked in city schools since 2016 and is also a school cheerleading coach, according to her LinkedIn profile.

She refused to discuss her lessons when a reporter approached her after school Thursday.

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"Excuse me, I'm not talking to anyone, no," she said, when asked if she stepped on black students in her class.

Cummings quotes Nelson Mandela and Walt Disney on her class web page, which also bears the image of a bald eagle and an American flag.



The web page for Cummings, who teaches social studies. (www.misscummingpage.weebly.com)

"Whatever you do, do it well. Do it so well that when people see you do it they will want to come back and see you do it again," reads the Disney quote.

Cummings' ill-conceived lesson isn't the first time a city teacher has grabbed headlines for giving offensive instruction involving slavery.

In 2013, two teachers from Manhattan Public School 59 taught a lesson that used killing and whipping slaves to teach subtraction and multiplication.

Those teachers weren't disciplined, but they did receive training in cultural sensitivity, Education officials said.

Topics: new york public schools, tremont, daily news exclusives

## Ben Chapman



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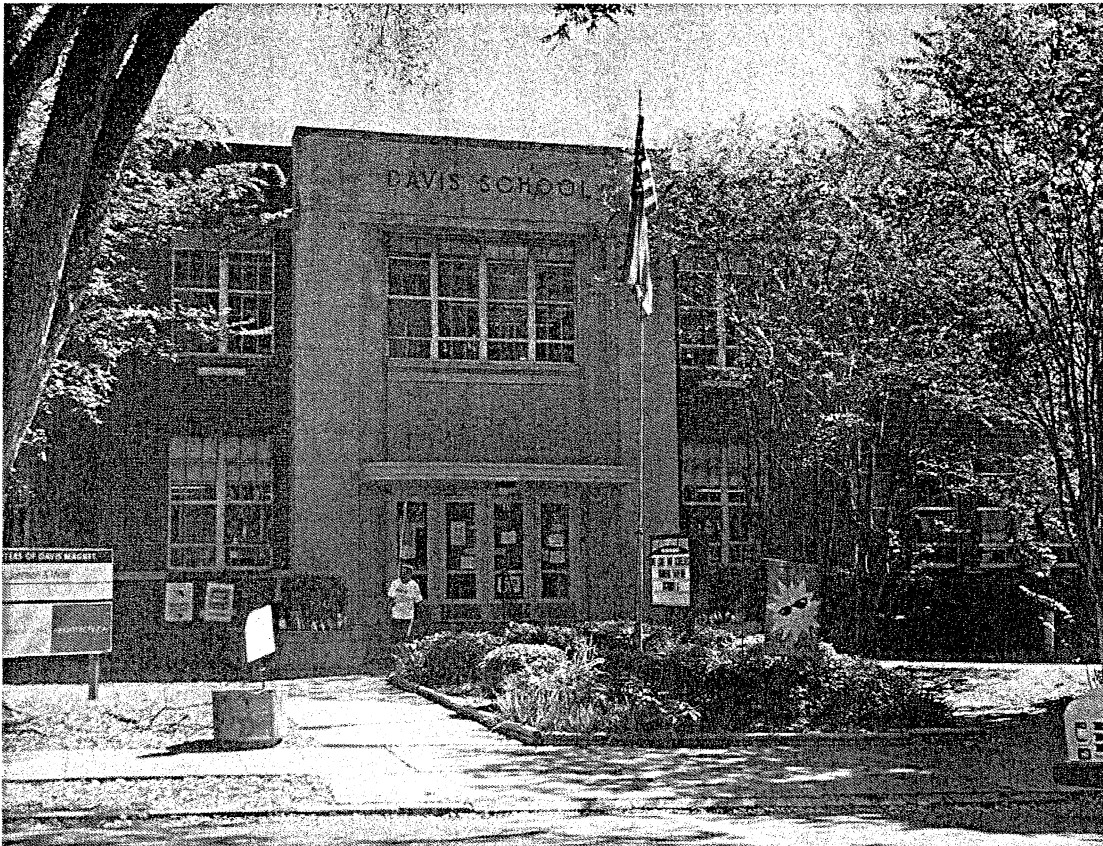
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# When Teaching Students About Slavery Fails

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A recent study suggests students are not learning the history in the U.S. very well.  
( Emily Wagster Pettus / Associated Press )

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Feb 7, 2018 · by Gwynne Hogan


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**A recent report** from the Southern Poverty Law Center suggests students are not learning the history of slavery in the United States very well and as a result, they're less able to reckon with contemporary issues of race and inequality. Very few high school seniors can identify slavery as the central cause of the Civil War. And the report says teachers don't have the material or the training to tackle such a complicated — and sensitive — topic.

The *New York Daily News* **reported recently** on a case at a middle school in the Bronx where a white teacher asked black students to lie face down on the floor. She then stepped on at least one of them in a lesson about the Middle Passage.

WNYP All Things Considered host Jami Floyd speaks with parent activist Natasha Capers with the NYC Coalition for Educational Justice about anti-bias training and culturally responsive teaching methods.

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# City to spend \$23M for anti-bias training for public school educators

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NEW YORK DAILY NEWS | APR 26, 2018



Chancellor Richard Carranza lauded the cultural sensitivity training for city educators, which Mayor de Blasio unveiled in the 2019 budget. (Jefferson Siegel/New York Daily News)

The city will spend \$23 million for anti-bias training of city educators after the Daily News exposed shocking instances of racism in public schools.

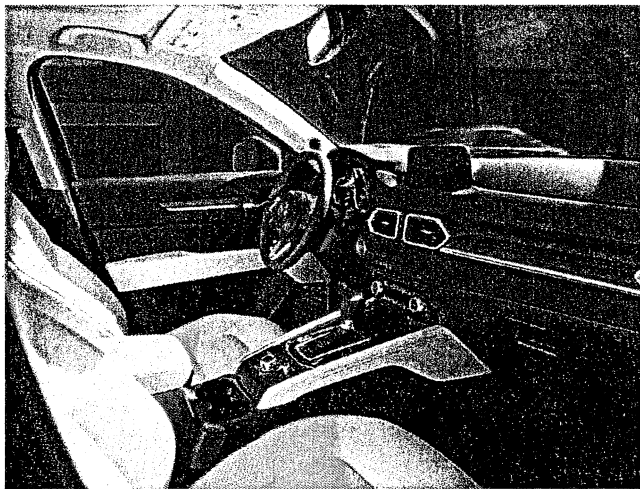
In February, The News uncovered allegations of a white Bronx teacher who stepped on a black student during a lesson on slavery, a Bronx principal who barred black history lessons and a Park Slope PTA group that used blackface imagery in gala invites.

The stories fueled demonstrations across the city from activists who had pushed for anti-bias training for months without response from the city.

Now the 2019 city budget unveiled by Mayor de Blasio includes millions in funding for the training and a plan to offer anti-bias training to all city educators by 2021.

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Chancellor Richard Carranza lauded the cultural sensitivity training for city educators.

"This is a real step forward for serving New York City's kids and families," Carranza said. "Culturally responsive teaching meets our kids and families where they are, and tailors the way we teach and serve our kids to their unique backgrounds and the experiences they bring into the classroom."

The city will spend \$4.8 million on implicit bias- and culturally responsive practice training in fiscal year 2019, which begins July 1. That's up from just \$660,000 on the programs in fiscal year 2018.

The budget for the programs also includes \$6.9 million for the programs in 2020, \$6.2 million for 2021 and \$5.5 million for 2022.

NYC Coalition for Educational Justice Coordinator Natasha Capers, who organized many of the rallies calling for anti-bias training, said thousands of parents have worked hard to bring racial justice to city classrooms.



## RECOMMENDED

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by Taboola

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